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Creative Writing for Youth: Now that's a Plot Twist!

A knight. No, wait, a princess. Or... how about a princess who disguises herself as a knight to try and save her long-lost twin sister? Now *that* we can work with.

Whether it is through poetry, short stories, novels, or plays, writing provides a limitless experience to express yourself. So often it is difficult to find the right emotions or words to cope with real life – writing offers an escape and a way to better understand yourself and the world around you. That is one of the many things we teach at Collecting Commas, the writing club for youth ages 10-17.

Born August 1, 2013, Collecting Commas has been one of the Abilene Public Library's



strongest programs for teens. Hosting anywhere from six to fourteen members on a weekly basis, Collecting

Commas offers an escape into a new forum for writers.

Meetings are conducted every Thursday at 4:30 and last for an hour; they run year round, and writers are welcome to come at any point.

By meeting as a group of peers, members are able to develop their writing style, learn new methods of writing, have feedback from peers and the librarian in charge, and gain new insights into their writing and themselves. Collecting Commas encourages creative writing – there will be no essays on summer vacations here (unless they involve sea monsters, of course). With a non-judgmental atmosphere, anyone seeking a fun, innovative place where the love of writing and imagination is prioritized is encouraged to attend.

Most meetings center around two things: a prompt that is given at the end of the previous meeting, and group writing exercises. The prompt is read at the beginning, each writer taking turns to read what they have written, with constructive criticism and praise given after. The prompts range from a “what if” idea to picture prompts to themes. The group writing exercises can take several different forms, but usually are either a story round (with every member writing

one line in a story to create something truly bizarre and unique) or story starters, where each person writes a few ideas, mixes them in a hat, then writes on what they pick at random.

Collecting Commas has worked on several large projects in the past, and this year is no exception. The Abilene Public Library hosts an annual library convention for nerds and geeks of all forms called Lib-Con. Coinciding with Free Comic Book Day in May, Lib-Con hosts a variety of events, from crafts to movies to scavenger hunts. The culmination of the week-long event is the Cosplay Contest. During this contest, Collecting Commas performs skits they wrote themselves for the intermission. This year, the group will be reprising the event with three all original skits they will write, rehearse, and act in on their own.

Acting not appeal to you? That's okay! Not everyone in Collecting Commas acts, but they all help write the skits. These skits are not only hilarious, but they help the writers learn to work with others, step outside their comfort zone, and just have some plain old fun with all the nerdy fandoms we know and love!

If that doesn't pique your interest, I don't know what will.

Come check out Collecting Commas any Thursday at 4:30 at the Main Library (202 Cedar St)! You won't regret it.